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FM AMEMBASSY ZAGREB  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7024  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0033

C O N F I D E N T I A L ZAGREB 001461

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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR DICARLO, EUR/SCE HOH, SAINZ, BALIAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/07/2016  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [ASEC](#) [AF](#) [HR](#)  
SUBJECT: ISAF: PARLIAMENT APPROVES TROOP INCREASE, TWO-YEAR  
MISSION EXTENSION

REF: ZAGREB 813

Classified By: Political Officer Tom Selinger for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

¶1. (U) On December 8, Parliament approved a two-year extension of the Croatian troop deployment to NATO's International Stabilization and Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan by a vote of 102 to 1. The extension also authorizes expanding the force from the current 147 to 200 soldiers in 2007 and to 300 soldiers in 2008 -- sufficient personnel to pursue at least the military aspects of Croatia's ambitions to take over a Provincial Reconstruction Team.

¶2. (C) The vote, which required a two-thirds "super majority," came at the end of a week of lobbying of opposition political leaders by Ambassador and DCM at the request of Minister of Defense Berislav Roncevic. While the Minister wisely proposed a two-year extension to avoid another deployment debate at the height of parliamentary elections expected in November next year, the campaign has already begun to brew and Roncevic feared party rivalries might ambush this ISAF authorization. Our interventions were designed to uncover potential pitfalls and to stress the importance of keeping the ISAF commitment out of partisan politics.

¶3. (C) COMMENT: While political opportunism is definitely in the air, our conversations with opposition leaders revealed strong commitment across the political spectrum to Croatia's ISAF contribution. In addition to calling for Post assistance, the MoD dedicated an unprecedented amount of energy to preparing parliament for this vote, demonstrating a small but welcome step forward in the maturing of the political process to approve troop deployments. END COMMENT.  
BRADTKE